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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002100

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON SENATE
LEADERSHIP

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Senate President David Mark and the Senate leadership on Wednesday October 22. During this initial meeting, the Ambassador and Senators engaged in an informal discussion on issues of mutual concern, including health programs, AFRICOM, corruption, the Niger Delta, and fostering more opportunities for consultation, legislative exchanges and Senate capacity building. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador, accompanied by PolOff (notetaker) met with Senate President David Mark (PDP-Benue South), Majority Leader Teslim Folarin (PDP-Oyo Central), Majority Whip Mahmud Kanti Bello (Katsina Central), Deputy Majority Leader Victor Ndoma-Egba (Cross River Central), Deputy Minority Leader Adeleke Mamora (AC-Lagos East), Deputy Minority Whip Kabiru Ibrahim Gaya (ANPP-Kano South), Ambassador Anthony George Manzo (PDP-Taraba North) Vice Chairman of the Committee on Information and Media, Ayo Arise (PDP Ekiti North) Chairman of the Committee on Privatization, Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello (PDP-Ogun Central) Chairwoman of the Committee on Health, and Ayogu Eze (PDP-Enugu North) Chairman of the Committee on Media and Information.

¶3. (C) Senator Obasanjo-Bello thanked the Ambassador for USG assistance in the field of health, particularly via the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. She encouraged increased engagement and assistance particularly in relation to maximizing Nigeria's participation in the Global Fund and asked that the Ambassador make the promotion of female education one of her priorities. The Ambassador noted President Bush's African Education Initiative and the Fulbright program as successful educational programs which included many female participants, as well as the fact that Nigeria did not initially invite USG participation in its Global Fund discussions.

¶4. (C) Senator Manzo asked for the Ambassador's views on AFRICOM, to which she reiterated that it was simply a more logical reorganization of the US military. The Ambassador added that, in her experience, the evolution of AFRICOM was a positive step which would lead to more opportunities for cooperation and capacity building between the U.S. and Nigerian militaries. "I appreciate that now I can call one office for decisions, rather than three or four as before,"

she commented. The Senate President (SP) acknowledged that though he understood the roles of the different geographical combat commands and appreciated how the new AFRICOM represented a more streamlined organization, many Nigerians did not. In response to a question about the impending Presidential transition in the U.S., the Ambassador asked the SP about the possibility of a transition in Nigeria were the Nigerian Supreme Court to overturn the 2007 election. Mark's reply was that speculating on such transition issues was "not within my purview."

15. (C) In response to a question about what Africans can expect from the U.S. for Africa, the Ambassador said the USG has not received enough credit for its initiatives in Africa, and that based on her years of attention to African issues, she felt there has been a much better partnership between the U.S. and Africa in the last 12 years than previously, "though it's not always as much as you may want." The Ambassador noted that she had just returned from Washington and that there are two main concerns about Nigeria: corruption and the Niger Delta. In his response, SP Mark focused on 419 scams, pointing out that there are two parties in these scams and both the perpetrator and the victim are at fault. The Delta was duly acknowledged as a GON priority, with the SP heralding the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry as a step forward.

16. (C) The SP also expressed a desire for greater legislative exchanges between the Nigerian and U.S. Senates as a means of institutional capacity building, particularly at the committee level. The Ambassador mentioned that many

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of the opportunities for interaction with their American legislative counterparts through visits by members of the U.S. Congress, had not been taken advantage of by the Nigerian Senate. Mark noted that the Senate's preference was to meet only with U.S. senators and possibly travel to the U.S. for interaction there with the U.S. Congress.

17. (C) COMMENT: Mark's reply that speculating on transition issues was "not within my purview" indicates that he is just keeping his cards close to his vest on the ramifications of the Supreme Court overturning the election, and his Constitutionally mandated role in leading an interim government. On corruption, Mark failed to address the EFCC or any corruption issue at the national level. Overall, the meeting was very cordial and seemingly much appreciated by the Senate leadership. END COMMENT.

This cable coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Sanders